

凡尔纳科幻探险系列

英汉
对照
全译本

Measure the Meridian

[法] Jules Verne 儒勒·凡尔纳/著

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《英汉对照凡尔纳科幻探险小说系列》
《测量子午线》

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导 读

或许我们很难想到，日常生活中经常要用的“米”这一度量单位，竟会与平常大家都不会关注的子午线关系紧密。科学家们正是通过测出子午线的确切长度来推出“米”的长度的。《测量子午线》这本小说，讲述的正是一队英俄科学家，如何在非洲大陆，历经千难万险，测出子午线确切长度的故事。

这是一群性情各异的科学家，而且探险队的两位领队在科学问题上还各持己见，这样一队人到神秘的非洲大陆去测量子午线，不仅要应对恶劣的自然环境，还要提防一些土著部落的侵扰，甚而连这片大陆上的一些动物也来捣乱，他们如何度过这重重难关呢？雪上加霜的是，英俄两国之间又爆发战争，他们又会怎样？整本小说情节紧密，精彩纷呈，趣味不断，实为一本佳作。

除了故事情节诱人外，凡尔纳关于非洲大陆风土人情，自然美景的描写也同样引人入胜，凡尔纳是位博学多才的作家，不仅文笔优美，更熟谙地理、历史、天文、物理等各方面的知识，因而读其作品，不仅有文学艺术方面的享受，同时也能学到不少科学知识。

凡尔纳在他的其他作品中，写过夫妻之情、情侣之爱、父子（女）之情，而在本书中，着力描写朋友之谊，两位年轻科学家之间的友情同样感人至深。尽管国籍不同，国家间纷争不断，但两位年轻人的心却紧紧相连，为友情可舍生命、名利。结尾处两位朋友的肺腑之言与情人间的海誓山盟一样令人感动。

写给读者的话

读小说可以划分为三个阶段。第一个阶段是以了解故事情节为主,读者关注的是书中形形色色的人物以及他们不同的遭遇和命运。第二个阶段的读者注重透过故事本身去体味它反映的社会现实和作者的情感,进而去品味人生的涵义。第三个阶段的读者则从纯文学的角度把握小说的构思、布局和创作技巧。

由于目的不同,阅读的方式也不同。所以,这三个阶段并没有层次高低的分别。英文小说的读者大多是以学习英语为目的,限于对语言的理解程度,不便也不可能按照后两个阶段的要求阅读。因此,读者们大可不必过高地要求自己,看懂大概内容即可。这样,阅读的负担便减轻了,学习的过程也回复了读书原本的目的——娱乐。

为此,我们特别提醒读者,在阅读时,切莫拘泥于生词。本丛书中任何一部英文小说的单词量均在 12,000 字左右,几乎包括了全部英语常用词汇。遇到生词是很正常的,一见生词就查字典的作法并不可取。过分地关注单词带来的只有扫兴和挫败感。为了保持阅读的兴趣和连续性,建议读者尝试着去抓句子的中心意思,对与中心意思联系不大的单词不必理会。只有与中心意思密切相关的生词才有查字典的必要。无论一页书上有多少生词,翻字典的次数也别超过三次,这是保持阅读连贯性的关键。假设每天看五页书,一页书上记三个单词,一天便掌握十五个单词,正是人脑每日能够熟记的单词量。照此速度,读者在两个半月内即能将本书轻松看完。如果需要将上述数字与英文水平挂钩的话,大学英语四级水平的读者在读完本书后,应能通过大学英语六级考试。而不足四级水平者,则可达到四级水平。

此外,读者应充分利用中文译文。本书的译文对照原文段落在一页上配附,帮助读者方便和灵活地阅读,碰见生词和海涩的句子时,读者即可与译文对照。对于个别难懂的段落,也不需费神推敲,可直接阅读译文。由于有了对照译文,读者免去了动辄查字典之苦,也能初探英语翻译之端倪。这正是我们精心设计的初衷。

当然,读者在这部小说中收获的不仅仅是英语,故事本身也给了

我们许多启迪。

我们相信,按照以上的建议阅读本书,读者会受益匪浅。

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Chapter 1 On the Banks of the Orange River

On 27th January, 1854, two men, stretched out at the foot of a gigantic weeping willow, were talking together, while they carefully watched the waters of the Orange River. This stream, called by the Dutch the *Groote river*, and by the Hottentots the *Gariiep*, is a worthy rival of the three grand African arteries - the Nile, the Niger, and the Zambezi. Like them, it has its cataracts, its floods, and its rapids. Several well-known travellers have praised the purity of its waters and the beauty of its shores.

Here the Orange River, as it approaches the Duke of York mountains, offered a magnificent spectacle - unscaleable cliffs, imposing masses of rock, tree trunks fossilised by the action of time, deep caverns, impenetrable forests as yet unvisited by the settler and his axe, encircled by the background of the Gariiep mountains, formed a scene incomparably beautiful. There the waters, pent up in too narrow a bed whose floor had fallen suddenly away, swept down in a fall of four hundred feet. Above the fall the surface of the water, broken here and there by a few rocky points projecting above tufts of green branches, swirled rapidly along. Below, the eye could hardly distinguish more than a dark whirlpool of water crowned by a thick cloud of vapour, tinted with the sev-

第一章 在奥兰治河边

1854年2月27日,奥兰治河边一棵高大的垂柳下,躺着两个男人,他们一边闲谈一边全神贯注地观察着河水。这条被荷兰殖民者称作格鲁特河,被土著霍顿督人称作加列普的奥兰治河,与非洲大陆的三大动脉——尼罗河、尼日尔河和赞比西河齐名。像这三大河流一样,它也有自己的高水位、急流和瀑布。很多知名旅行家都称赞其河水清澈,两岸风光秀丽。

奥兰治河在这一地段临近约克公爵山脉,这里呈现出一派壮丽景观:陡峭的悬崖、巨大的石堆、古老的树干、深邃的岩洞,从未被开发过的原始森林,在加列班山脉的环绕下,形成了一方无以比拟的美景。这里河床由于太窄已塌陷,水流是从400尺的高处直泻下来。瀑布的上游,从绿油油的草木丛中探出几块岩石划破水帘,水流在这里急速旋转着。在瀑布下方,只能看到一潭被浓雾笼罩的水涡,在阳光照耀下七彩缤纷。巨大的水流声响又被四周的山谷激起阵阵回音。

en prismatic colours. A deafening roar from the abyss was intensified by the echoes from all sides of the valley.

Of these two men, doubtless brought together by the chances of exploration in this part of South Africa, one gave scant attention to the beauties which Nature spread before him. He was a hunter, a bushman — a fine type of that valiant race of the keen eye and quick gestures, whose wandering life is passed in the forest. The term bushman — an English word from the Dutch *Boschjesman*, — really means 'the man of the bush.' It is applied to the tribes who beat the country north-west of the Cape Colony. None of their families are sedentary; their life is spent in wandering about the district between the Orange River and the mountains to its east, in plundering the farms and destroying the crops of those tyrannical colonists who have driven, and are driving, them back towards the arid regions of the interior, where there grows more stone than trees.

This bushman was about forty, and a fine tall fellow, evidently endowed with great muscular strength. Even in repose his body denoted activity in every limb. The ease and freedom of his attitude indicated energy and resolution — the sort of person cast in the same mould as the famous Leatherstocking, the hero of the Canadian prairies, though perhaps not so cool as Cooper's favourite hunter. This was shown by the occasional colouring up of his face in response to the faster beating of his heart.

The bushman was no longer a savage like his ancestors the ancient Saquas; born of an English father and a Hottentot mother, this half-

这两个在南部非洲探险的两个男人无疑是偶然碰上的。其中一个对眼前的自然美景漠然视之。他是一个布希曼猎人——他双目炯炯有神,动作迅速,他在这片深林中过着游牧生活。布希曼人这个词来自荷兰语布希杰斯曼人所说的英语,意思是“灌木丛人”,指那些在英国开普敦殖民区西北部游牧的部落。布希曼家庭都没有固定居所。他们在奥兰治河和东部山地之间过着流浪生活,抢劫蛮横的殖民者的农场,破坏他们的庄稼。就是这些殖民者将他们赶进了那些只长石头不长植物的干旱地带。

这位布希曼男子40岁左右,身材高大,体格强壮。即使在休息时身体仍似乎能随时行动。他表情轻松自在,显示出他精力充沛、办事果断,和著名的巴拉圭人一样,是加拿大草原上的英雄,虽然不如库珀猎手那样镇定,这一点可以从他在心跳加快时在面颊上一闪而过的红晕看出来。

这个布希曼人却不再是像他的祖先——古老的萨古瓦人那样的野人。作为霍顿督母亲

caste had gained rather than lost by his contact with foreigners, and he could speak his paternal language fluently. His costume, half Hot-tentot and half European, consisted of a red flannel shirt, a jacket and breeches of deer-skin, and catskin leggings. From his neck hung a small bag containing his knife, a pipe, and some tobacco. A sheepskin cap covered his head. Round his waist he wore a thick belt of native workmanship, and on his wrists were ivory rings, very skilfully carved by some Hot-tentot artist; a kaross, made of the skins of tiger-cats and leopards, hung from his shoulders down to his knees. A native dog lay dozing at his feet. The bushman drew short, quick puffs of smoke from his bone pipe, he gave unequivocal signs of impatience.

‘Now, Mokoum, do keep calm,’ his companion told him, ‘you’re really a most impatient man – except when you’re hunting! My worthy friend, you know we can’t change the order of things. The men we’re waiting for will be here sooner or later; they’ll come tomorrow, if they don’t come today.’

The speaker was a young man about twenty-five, and he offered a strong contrast to the hunter, keeping calm in his every action. There was no mistaking his origin: he was an Englishman; his ‘bourgeois’ attire showed that he was not accustomed to travel – he seemed an employee astray in some savage wilds, and he was more like a clerk, or secretary, or some other variety of the great bureaucratic family.

Nor was he a traveller, but a distinguished

和英国人父亲的混血儿子，他与外国人往来频繁，说一口流利的英语。他的衣着是半霍顿督半欧洲式的：红色法兰绒衬衫、大袖口上衣外套、羚羊皮短裤和野猫皮做成的绑腿。在他的脖子上挂着一个小包，里面放着一把刀和一支烟斗，头上扣着一顶羊皮圆帽，腰间扎了一条宽厚的兽皮腰带。在他裸露的手腕上，环绕着一些做工精巧的霍顿督艺人做的象牙圆环，肩上搭了一件长至膝头的“克鲁斯”——一种用虎皮裁制的带褶裥的大衣。一条土著狗正睡在他脚边。布希曼人急促地吸着一支骨制烟斗，那样子十分不耐烦。

“冷静点，莫库姆。”他的拍档对他说：“当您不打猎时，您可真是最没耐心的男人！我尊敬的伙伴，你应该明白我们对眼下的情况无能为力，我们等待的人迟早都会来到的，今天不来，明天也会来的。”

说话的这人是一位 25 岁左右的年轻人，与猎人正好形成鲜明对比——他一举一动都沉着冷静。毫无疑问他是个英国人。他身上那套“穿着打扮”显示出还不习惯于出门远行。他看上去就像一个误入蛮荒地带的城市雇员，看上去更像一个秘书、会计或其它类似职业中的一员。

实际上，这位年轻人根本

man of science. William Emery was assistant-astronomer at the Cape Observatory, which had for many years rendered valuable services to science.

This savant, who was rather out of his element in this desert region of South Africa, several hundred miles from Cape Town, had great difficulty in curbing his companion's natural impatience.

'Mr. Emery,' the hunter replied in very good English, 'we have now been waiting a week at these Morgheda cataracts, our *rendez-vous* on the Orange River. Now it's a very long time since any member of my family has stayed a week in the same place. You forget that we're wanderers, and when we keep still so long our feet begin to burn.'

'Friend Mokoum,' the astronomer reminded him, 'the men we're expecting are coming from England, and we can very well grant them a week's law. You must take into consideration the length of the journey, the delays their steamer may have met with in ascending the Orange river, and, in a word, the thousand obstacles inherent in an expedition. We have been ordered to prepare everything for a journey to explore Southern Africa, and then to wait for my colleague Colonel Everest from Cambridge observatory, at the Morgheda Falls. Here we now are at the waterfall and here we must wait. What else would you have me do, my worthy bushman?'

The hunter evidently wanted to do something else, for his hand was continually playing with the lock of his rifle, with which he could hit a

就不是旅行者,而是一位杰出的学者。威廉·艾默里,他是派驻开普敦天文台——一个长期以来为科学提供主要服务的机构的助理天文学家。

置身于南部非洲这块距开普敦几百英里的人烟稀少的地带,学者有点不适应,但他只能尽力容忍着同伴的急性子。

“艾默里先生,”猎人用漂亮的英语回答他,“我们在这儿——奥兰治河摩尔各答瀑布下,已经等了八天了,而我的家族中任何一个成员从未在一个地点停留一周。您忘了我们是游牧民族,这样等着不动时间一长脚会着火的。”

“我的莫库姆朋友,”天文学家又说道,“我们等待的人来自英国,因此完全可以给他们八天的宽限。要知道他们的行程很长,汽船沿奥兰治河溯流而上也会造成耽搁,总之,在旅程中也许会碰到千万个困难。人家已经提醒我们要对南非的这次探险旅行作好一切准备,然后再来摩尔各答瀑布下等待我的同事,剑桥天文台的埃弗雷特上校。这儿就是摩尔各答瀑布,我们必须在这儿等着。您还想要我怎样办呢?我尊敬的布希曼人。”

猎人真想做点什么,他的手在反复地抚摸着他的来复枪的扳手。装上子弹他能用它击

wild cat or an antelope at eight hundred yards with a conical bullet, for he had discarded the quiver of poisoned arrows still used by his countrymen in favour of European firearms.

‘But, Mr. Emery, are you sure you haven’t made any mistake?’ asked Mokoum; ‘was it at the Morgheda Falls, and at the end of January that you were to meet?’

‘Yes, my friend,’ William Emery assured him quietly, ‘here’s a letter from Mr. Airy, the Astronomer Royal at Greenwich Observatory, which will prove I’ve made no mistake.’

The bushman took the letter his companion offered him, and turned it over and over with the air of a man little acquainted with writing; then, handing it back to Emery ‘Tell me again,’ he said, ‘what that bit of black-marked paper says.’

The young savant, gifted with patience proof against all trials, again began to tell his friend the hunter what he had already repeated a score of times. During the last week of December he had received a letter from Colonel Everest, giving him notice of his early arrival, accompanied by a scientific commission, whose destination was South Africa. What their plans were, or why they were coming so far down the African continent, Emery could not say, for on that point Mr. Airy’s letter was silent.

Following the instructions he had received, he had got ready at Lattakou, one of the most northern stations in the Hottentot country, waggons, provisions – in a word, everything necessary to equip a Boschjeman caravan;

中 800 码之外的一只野猫或羚羊。可见布希曼人已经丢掉了同胞的芦苇箭筒和毒箭而改用欧式先进的武器。

“可是，艾默里先生，您真的一点都没有搞错吗？”莫库姆说道，“他们确实是跟您约定一月的月底在摩尔各答瀑布下碰头吗？”

“是的，我的朋友。”威廉·艾默里平静地答道，“这是格林威治天文台台长埃黎先生的信，它能证明我确实没弄错。”

布希曼人接过同伴递过来的信，作为一个几乎不识字的人，把它翻来覆去看了几遍，然后又还给威廉·艾默里。“请再说一遍这片涂黑的纸都说了些什么。”

年轻的学者，对任何事情都保持着与生俱来的耐性，又开始了向他的猎人朋友第二十遍的重复叙述。去年 12 月的最后一周，威廉·艾默里收到了来自埃弗雷特上校的一封信，信中说他和一个科学委员会将抵达南非。关于这个委员会的计划和它为什么要不远万里来到非洲大陆，艾默里也说不上来，因为埃黎先生在信中只字未提。

他按照信里的指示，忙着在拉塔库——霍顿督地区最北部的一个驿站，准备一些四轮运货车、食物等，总之是一个布希斯曼旅行队所必需的全部

then, knowing the reputation of the hunter Mokoum, who had accompanied Anderson in his hunting expeditions in Western Africa, and David Livingstone, when he first explored Lake Ngami and the Zambezi Falls, he had offered him command of the caravan.

It was then arranged that the bushman, who knew the country perfectly, should take Emery with him to the banks of the Orange River, to the appointed rendezvous at the Morgheda falls. It was there that the scientific commission were to join them. This commission had sailed in the Augusta frigate and were to arrive at the mouth of the Orange River, on the west coast of Africa, off Cape Voltas, and then ascend the river as far as the cataracts.

William Emery and Mokoum had accordingly come with a waggon which they had left down in the valley, and which was to take the strangers and their baggage to Lattakou, unless they preferred following some tributary of the Orange River, after avoiding Morgheda Falls by a portage of some miles.

This having been once more duly impressed on the bushman's mind, the latter advanced to the edge of the gulf into which the boiling river poured its waters below. The astronomer followed him; there, from a projecting spur, they were able to command the course of the stream below the cataract for several miles.

For a few moments Mokoum and his companion stood scrutinising the surface of the river, which resumed its tranquil course about a quarter of a mile down stream. Nothing - nei-

供应。然后,他慕名结识了土著猎人莫库姆,知道他曾经陪伴安德森在西非狩猎,还与戴维·利文斯通共同完成了对恩加米湖和赞比西河各大瀑布的首次探险,便授与了他这支探险队的指挥权。

接着便商妥让对本地了如指掌的布希曼人领着威廉·艾默里来到奥兰治河边指定地点——摩尔各答瀑布下。科学委员会将在此地与他们会合。这个委员会应该搭乘英国海军的奥古斯塔战舰,在非洲西海岸沃尔帕斯角附近抵达奥兰治河口,然后溯流而上直抵摩尔各答瀑布。

威廉·艾默里和莫库姆来时带了一辆四轮马车停在山谷下,因为摩尔各答瀑布使得几英里河段无法通航,那辆马车将把他们和行李直接送到拉塔库。

这一次布希曼人把这些前因后果牢记在脑子里了,他径直往前走走到水潭旁边,河水在里面如沸腾一般泛着泡沫。天文学家跟着他。从一个向前突出的岩石上,可以俯瞰瀑布以下奥兰治河好几英里的远处。

在几分钟内,莫库姆和同伴仔细地观察着距离此处稍远一些的河面,在那里河水开始重新平静下来。然而什么也没

ther boat nor canoe - broke its surface.

It was then about three in the afternoon, and as, in the south, January corresponds with July in the north, the sun, almost perpendicular, heated the air to 105° Fahrenheit in the shade. Had it not been for the westerly breeze, which moderated it in some degree, this temperature would have been unbearable for any one but a bushman; yet the young savant, all bone and muscle, did not suffer much from it: the thick foliage of the trees hanging over the gulf protected him from the rays of the sun.

Not a bird broke the solitude during the scorching hours of the day; not a beast left the shelter of the thicket to venture into the open ground. Nor could the slightest sound have been heard even if the cataract had not filled the air with its roaring.

After watching the river for ten minutes, Mokoum turned to Emery and stamped impatiently on the ground; his eyes, gifted as they were with great powers of vision, has found nothing.

‘Suppose your people don’t come?’ he asked the young man.

‘They will come, my good hunter,’ replied Emery; ‘they are men of their word, and they’ll be as punctual as astronomers; besides, we have nothing to complain of. This letter announces their arrival by the end of January; to-day is the twenty-seventh, and they still have four days to reach the Falls.’

‘And if in four days they haven’t appeared?’ asked the hunter.

‘Then, master bushman, we shall have a

有,没有轮船也没有独木舟。

现在是午后三点,此地的一月正是北半球的七月,太阳几乎垂直照射着这里把树荫处的空气都加热到了华氏 105°。如果没有微微的西风稍微缓和一下,除了布希曼人,任何其他人都无法忍受这种酷暑。然而,年轻的学者从肌肉到骨头并没有感到非常难受。探及深潭顶部的浓密的树叶,为他遮住了阳光。

没有一只鸟儿来打破这一天中最热时间的寂静,也没有一只动物敢冒险从荫凉的丛林底下走出来进到林中空地里。听不到一丝杂音,即使是瀑布的咆哮也未能完全填满空气中的寂静。

观察了十分钟后,莫库姆转向威廉·艾默里,一只大脚烦躁地踢打着地面。虽然天生是有一双锐利的眼睛,但他没有发现任何迹象。

“如果您等的人不来了呢?”他向科学家问道。

“他们会来的,我勇敢的猎人。”艾默里回答,“这是些守信用的人,他们像天文学家一样准时。而且,我们对他们无可抱怨,信上说的是这个月底到达,今天是 27 号,他们仍有四天的时间到达摩尔各答瀑布。”

“可是,如果四天之后他们仍旧不出现呢?”

“好啊!我的打猎高手,这

very good opportunity of exercising our patience, for we shall wait here till I'm certain they won't come.'

'By the god Ko!' the bushman cried loudly, 'I believe you're capable of waiting until the Gariep stops pouring its waters into yonder gulf!'

'No, my friend, not so,' Emery replied very quietly; 'reason must be the rule of our actions. Now what does reason tell us? Why, that if Colonel Everest and his companions, worn out by a fatiguing journey, perhaps in want of essential food, and lost in the solitudes of this region, should not find us at the rendezvous, we shall be to blame. Should any misfortune happen, the responsibility would justly fall on us; so it is our duty to remain at our post.'

'We lack for nothing here. Our waggon is below in the valley waiting for us, and gives us a safe shelter at night; we have food in abundance. Here Nature is to be seen in all her magnificence and she demands our admiration. It is a new happiness for me to pass a few days in these superb forests and on the banks of this matchless river.'

'As for you, Mokoum, what more can you possibly want? Feathered and furred game abounds, and your rifle supplies us with our daily venison. Go and shoot, my brave hunter, and kill the time and the deer or buffalo together. Go at once, my good huntsman, while I watch for these laggards, and so at all events there'll be no danger of your feet taking root

将是锻炼我们耐心的大好机会,因为我们将等待下去,直到我能确认他们真的不来了。"

"我的上帝!"布希曼人大声嚷道,"我相信您有耐心一直等到列普河水不再轰隆隆地冲进这个深潭!"

"不,我的朋友,不,"威廉·艾默里平静地答道,"应该让理性支配我们的行动。现在,理性告诉我们:如果埃弗雷特上校和他的同行者,被艰难的旅行搞得精疲力尽,也许已经弹尽粮绝了,也许在这片荒僻的地区迷路了,所以不能来这里与我们会合,那么我们都该受到谴责。如果有什么不幸的事情发生了,责任又一次落到我们肩上。所以现在等在这儿是职责所在。"

在这里我们什么都不缺,四轮马车就在山谷下等着,为我们提供夜宿。食物也非常充足。这里壮丽的自然景观值得一看。能在这条独一无二的奥兰河边,在这片美丽的丛林中度过几天,对我来说真是一种未有过的享受。

至于您,莫库姆,您还能要求什么呢?树林中野禽丰富,而您的来复枪总是在为我们提供野味。打猎去,我勇敢的猎人,去打几头黄鹿或水牛来消磨一下时间吧。去吧,我勇敢的布希曼人。由我来等候那些迟到的人,这样一来,至少您的

here.'

The hunter felt the astronomer's advice worth following, and decided to beat the neighbouring woods for a few hours. Lions, hyaenas, and leopards had no terrors for this Nimrod of the African forests, so he whistled to his dog Top. The intelligent animal, which seemed as impatient as its master, jumped up at him, and testified by its joyful bark its approbation of the huntsman's plans. Hunter and dog soon disappeared under cover of the wood which formed the background to the cataract.

William Emery, left alone, lay down at the foot of the willow, and while awaiting the sleep which the great heat could not fail to induce, he began to ponder over his present situation. There he was, far from any inhabited region, close to the Orange River, which was still but little known. He was expecting Europeans — countrymen — who had left their homes to run the risks of an expedition in distant lands.

But what was the object of this expedition? What scientific problem could they seek to solve in the deserts of South Africa? What observations were to be made at the thirtieth parallel south? This is just what Mr. Airy, the Astronomer Royal, had omitted to state. They had requested his co-operation as a savant well acquainted with the climate of the southern latitudes, and, as it was evidently a scientific question, his services were, of course, at his colleagues' disposal. As the young astronomer put these questions to himself and found himself

双脚不会有在地上生根的危险了。”

猎人觉得天文学家的建议值得考虑,于是决定到附近的荆棘丛和矮树林中打打猎,消磨几个小时。狮子、鬣狗、豹子都不会使像他这样一个熟悉非洲丛林的“尼姆罗”感到为难。他向自己的猎狗汤普打个呼哨,这只聪明的动物,好像同主人一样焦躁不安,一下子蹦起来,以欢快的叫声对主人表示赞同。猎人和狗很快就消失在了环绕着瀑布的那片茂密丛林中。

威廉·艾默里独自在垂柳树下躺下,在高温导致的困意袭来之前,他考虑起自己目前的处境来。他正置身于仍然鲜为人知的奥兰治河边,远离人烟。他正在等候一些欧洲人——他的背井离乡冒险远征的同胞。

然而,这次探险的目的是什么?它想在南非的沙漠中解决什么科学难题呢?它将在南纬30'的地方进行何种观测实验呢?这恰恰是埃黎先生,格林威治天文台台长没有在信中讲明的地方。他们把他——艾默里,看作熟悉南半球气候的学者而向他请求协助,既然涉及到一些科学问题,他的同事一致同意由他提供帮助。年轻的天文学家想着这些问题,发